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Chapter 1
Scandinavia: Traits, Trends and Tensions

Abstract: The Scandinavian welfare societies depend on strong states to provide public services and to redistribute income. Scandinavians enjoy comprehensive welfare systems that offer citizens social security within open economies. Scandinavia combines international market capitalism with government regulation. The political–economic crisis in Europe influences Scandinavia as well, with pressure from globalization and immigration, and new political divisions that are articulated by right-wing populism.

The Scandinavian countries are built on egalitarian values and practices and the level of trust between people is high. However, the countries are finding that these egalitarian values also have unintended, problematic consequences, especially as these once relatively homogenous societies experience growing diversity. Today, there are peculiar contrasts in the Scandinavian cultural–religious landscape, between old churches with large majorities of the population as members, and levels of secularity in Scandinavian societies that position the region as the most secular corner of the world.

Keywords: Scandinavia, welfare state, welfare society, homogeneity, equality

The Scandinavian countries, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, are known as welfare societies that are based on cultural homogeneity and the ideals of social equality. Scandinavia, with its surveyable population of 21 million (2017), is small in scale, but it scores high on several indices of social and economic performance.[1] There is a widespread self-understanding of liberal open-mindedness, and secularity is often taken for granted. Equality between the sexes is a core value. Conflicts are usually handled in negotiations within a neo-corporatist system between strong states and collective institutions, or in open public debate (Engelstad et al. 2017b; Hilson 2008). These conflict-solving mechanisms extend to the media system. The Scandinavian countries are on top in world press freedom rankings[2] and have strong public service media (Syvertsen et al. 2014).

1 Most prominent in the UNDP Human Development Reports, see http://hdr.undp.org/en/2016-report

2 For example, the 2017 index from *Reporters Without Borders*, https://rsf.org/en/ranking_table (Accessed 12 June 2017).

Within this seemingly harmonious framework cultural tensions are evolving. The political–economic crisis in Europe also influences the Scandinavian countries. The above Scandinavian characteristics are under pressure from globalization and immigration, with new political divisions being articulated by right-wing populism. Public tensions over radical Islamism and immigration from Muslim countries ignite discussions about Islam as a threat, although the Muslim population makes up small minorities in the Scandinavian countries. Global influences contribute to contested religion in Scandinavia. Growing diversity in the religious field, as well as in the media landscape, forms part of the conflicts that are arising. This is the core issue in the present book, to be researched throughout the following chapters. The tensions and conflicts are often framed as being cultural, but they may instead be social, economic, and political.

This chapter tries to map how these tensions are spelled out in the domains of religion and media in Scandinavia, as well as in the relations between media and religion. We do not go deep into analysing the issues, as we also need space for giving some basic, but relevant information about social and cultural frameworks in Scandinavia. The main aim of the chapter is to work as a background for the specific case studies to come, and we provide many references to the analyses in the following chapters.

1.1 Scandinavia and the Nordic Region

There is a distinction between Scandinavia and the Nordic region. Scandinavia is part of the Nordic region, which also encompasses Finland and Iceland, as well as Greenland and some smaller islands. There is geographical, cultural, and political proximity between Scandinavia and the wider Nordic sphere. All five Nordic countries are built on egalitarian values and practices. But all five countries experience unintended challenging consequences as these once relatively homogenous societies become more cultural-religious diverse.

Immigration implies a demographic challenge that is causing cultural tensions. Sweden has been the most open to immigration. Of the three countries, Sweden has the biggest population but this amounts to no more than 10 million people. The two other countries are smaller – and more restrictive on immigration. Denmark has the highest population density, with more people (5.8 million) than the more spacious Norway (5.3 million).[3]

3 Source: National statistical bureaus as per mid-2017.

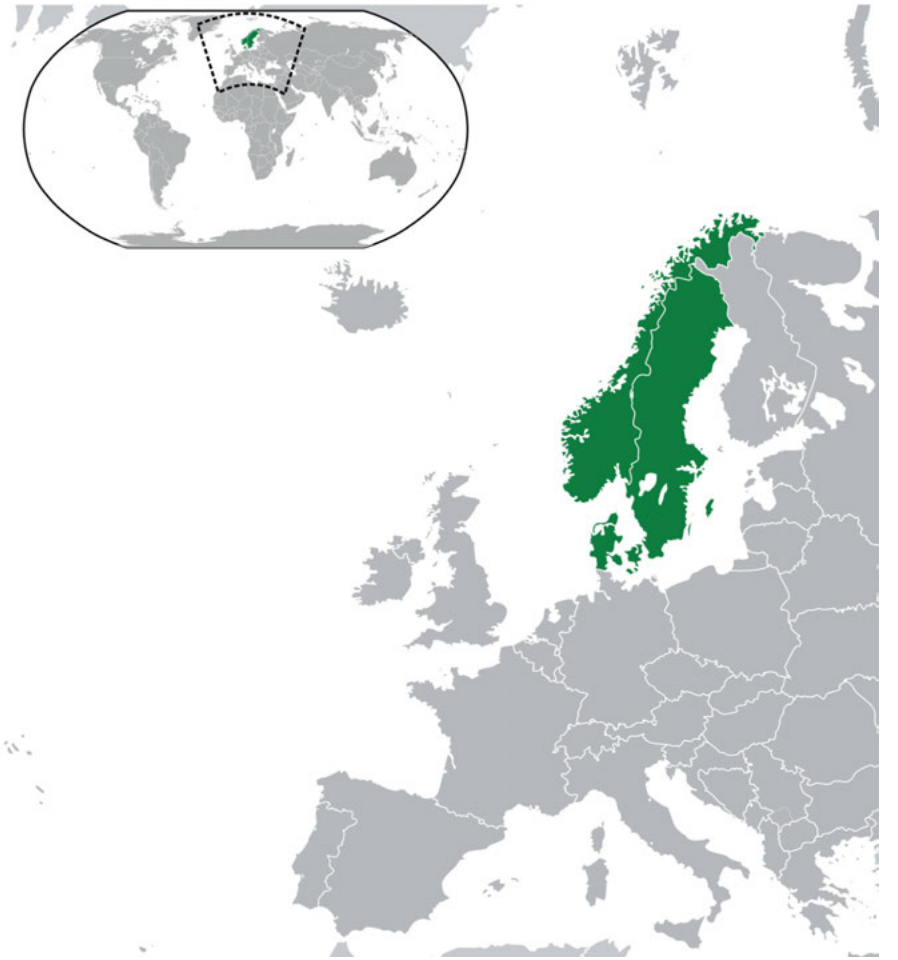

Figure 1.1 Scandinavia is geographically positioned 'on the top' of Europe.

Despite different histories, and even previous internal armed conflicts, the Scandinavian countries are closely knit together (Kouri and Olesen 2016). They are all parliamentarian democracies and formally monarchies. The Scandinavian languages are close and usually people understand each other's writing and speech, although immigrant languages and the use of English are on the rise. The three countries have many cultural traditions in common and thus have easily shared stories. This is slowly changing, with the growing ethnic and religious diversity and the fragmentation of the media landscape.

The Scandinavian countries have chosen different paths in international economic and political cooperation. Denmark and Sweden are members of the EU, while Norway is not, although it is integrated into the European economic market. Denmark and Norway are members of NATO, while Sweden is neutral. The three countries, however, work together in Nordic institutions, with Finland and Iceland included, and have long shared passport-free movements across their borders.

Taken together, the three Scandinavian countries have no more than approximately one-fourth of Germany's population, or about the same number of inhabitants as the US state of Florida. The small scale has been a favourable condition for the development of the Scandinavian welfare system. Changes, like recent immigration, are creating tensions.

1.2 Welfare States in Transition

The Nordic welfare *societies,* built after World War II, depend on strong *states* to provide public services and to redistribute income. In return for relatively high taxes the Scandinavians get free public education through the university level, a national health care system mostly for free, guaranteed paid leave from work for both mothers and fathers of infants, and subsidized child care, among other benefits. The Scandinavian *neo-corporatist states* are characterized by 'a seemingly unlikely combination of a basic liberal orientation with a high degree of state intervention ... upheld due to the long term development of democratic institutions, in tandem with a growing inclusion of groups excluded from the public sphere and fields of power' (Engelstad 2017, 265). Peasants', workers' and women's organizations are among the social movements that have made their way into institutionalized negotiations and helped shape the modern state (Aakvaag 2017). Even if some movements in a neo-liberal direction have taken place in recent decades in the Scandinavian countries, they still fit better than most countries into the Social Democratic type in Esping-Andersen's typology of welfare capitalist regimes, and more so than into the two other types, Liberal and Conservative. The main reasons for this are that many welfare benefits are still universal and are not subject to means testing, and, secondly, that many welfare benefits are distributed to people in their capacity as citizens, and are not only reserved for occupationally active people (Esping-Andersen 1990).

Scandinavians, then, enjoy comprehensive welfare state systems that offer the citizens social security within open economies. They combine international market capitalism with government regulations and coordinated negotiations between strong employer's associations and strong unions. Gender equality and

women's participation in work are underlined as key values. This way of organizing society has been termed the Nordic or Scandinavian model (Barth, Moene, and Willumsen 2015; Hilson 2008).

The economic base has primarily been industry in Sweden, agriculture in Denmark, and fish and oil in Norway. All three countries experience pressures for change in open, globalized economies. Wage differences have been relatively small, but gaps in income have expanded somewhat over the last 30 years, in Sweden more than in Denmark and Norway, and the gap is even wider in wealth than in income.[4] This implies a growing potential for social tensions, which counter the Scandinavian ideology of equality and small social differences.

1.3 Lutheran Background in Strong States – Deconstructed

The Scandinavian states have since the 1500s been legitimized through state churches: These majority Evangelical Lutheran churches have their roots in the Protestant Reformation five hundred years ago. As the religious landscape slowly became more diverse, particularly since the 1970s (Furseth et al. 2018), tensions have grown over the privileged position of the majority church. Sweden dissolved its state church in 2000. Norway cut the confessional link to the Lutheran religion in the Constitution in 2012, and took further steps to split church and state five years later. Denmark still has a state church, a liberal 'folk church'. In all three countries, state recognition is extended to other registered faith communities and worldview organizations. All three countries give financial support to the majority church as well as to other registered communities, through different national arrangements (Kühle et al. 2018). Such economic funding still seems to have broad political support. However, some politicians argue that violation of human rights should make it possible to withdraw such funding schemes, and voices arguing for secular arrangements across institutional sectors are becoming more vocal. A few politicians, both left-wing and right-wing, even ask why the state should automatically sponsor religious organizations, as long as other voluntary cultural work is not automatically supported. Still, the imprint of the long Christian tradition on the fabric of society is there, e. g. almost every holy day in the Christian calendar is a national holiday in Scandinavia.

4 *Perspektivmeldingen 2017,* [Economic perspectives 2017], The Norwegian Government, Meld. St. 29 (2016 – 2017), 135 – 137; and OECD Statistics, "Income Distribution and Poverty," accessed 31 March 2017, http://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=66670

1.4 Homogeneity, Equality, Similarity, and Trust

The Scandinavian countries, with their relatively sparse populations, have often been considered to be relatively homogeneous. The populations have limited the potential for diverse institutions, and the minorities have been small in number and politically weak. It is true that the three countries, until recently, have had – some would say still have – a dominating national majority church that is relatively closely intertwined with the state. There are also publicly owned public service broadcasting corporations (see Chapter 5), that dominate but which are in competition with commercial radio and TV channels. The Scandinavian school system is also relevant here. Almost all young Danes, Norwegians, and Swedes are pupils in schools that are part of the public sector at both primary and secondary levels. There are openings for commercial schools and schools that are owned by religious and other voluntary organizations, but the number of pupils in such schools is low, and the state has some supervision and control also in these schools, as they are partly financed by public means. Hence, despite some local variations, almost the whole population has received a common socialization within a framework that is set by the state.

Some other characteristics are often presented together with homogeneity: The Scandinavian countries are dominated by egalitarian values and practices, and the level of trust between people is high.[5] Surveys from around 2010 put Denmark on top, Norway second, and Sweden as number six among countries in the world, in terms of responses to the question of trust in other people. The population in Scandinavia is also more state-friendly and has a higher trust in the government than most countries (Listhaug and Ringdal 2008; Bjørnskov and Bergh 2011).

These characteristics are often praised by Nordic researchers (Barth et al. 2014), and by others as well (Wilkinson and Pickett 2010). Small economic differences tend to prevent social conflicts and the development of mutual stereotypes, it is argued. Relatively small differences also make it easier for people to trust each other, and the presence of trust facilitates efficiency, as the number of control mechanisms can be reduced.

However, sometimes egalitarian values have unintended problematic consequences. The Norwegian anthropologist Marianne Gullestad (2002, 46) cites Alexis de Tocqueville, who pointed out in his study of *Democracy in America*

5 For Denmark and Norway, data from European Values Study, Wave 4, conducted 2008 – 2010. For Sweden and most other countries from the World Values Survey, data from Wave 6, conducted 2010 – 2014.

from 1840 that the idea of equality seems to require similarity, that people have to feel they are more or less the same to be of equal value (Tocqueville 2008 [1840]). Gullestad finds this tendency to be particularly strong in Scandinavia, where equality is conceived of as sameness. This has consequences for the relationship to migration and integration by 'others', she holds.

Many Scandinavians require sameness from newcomers in order to be regarded as equal (Gullestad 2002). This may partly be an explanation when people feel threatened by immigrants, however, this tendency could be countered by deliberate policies and personal experiences with newcomers from other cultures. At the time of writing, Gullestad (2002) observed a growing 'ethnification' of the national identity, with the renewed importance of Lutheran Christianity in contrast to Islam. By 2017, the perceived challenge from Islam is related to national culture as such, and not particularly to a Christian tradition. Gullestad's analysis of equality and similarity is interesting, but so general that it is difficult to confront with specific empirical data. A point that weakens Gullestad's hypothesis about the connection between egalitarianism and a demand for sameness is an impression that the citizens and elite groups who are mostly in favour of equality are also those that are most positive to immigration.[6]

The image of Scandinavian countries as unusually homogeneous countries can be contested. Up North in Norway and Sweden, the Sami have been suppressed by the national governments. The Sami were recognized by the United Nations as an indigenous people, giving them rights to keep their languages, reindeer husbandry, and traditions. Today, they are recognized in their respective countries and have separate parliaments, but with limited scope for making their own decisions. There are still tensions, particularly over the use of land resources (Berg-Nordlie, Saglie, and Sullivan 2015).

Furthermore, we can also find tensions within the majority cultures in Scandinavian countries. The Norwegian sociologist Stein Rokkan is famous for having developed a typology of important cleavages in European politics. His typology is inspired by Norwegian political history, but is relevant also in other countries, not least in Denmark and Sweden. In addition to the socio-economic dimension, from left to right, and focusing on socio-economic inequality and the balance between market and state regulation, he identified two other important dimensions that influence voting behaviour, and politics in general. Firstly, he described a moral–religious dimension, often focusing on support for religion, sexual ethics, family politics, and issues concerning life and death (abortion and the possibility of legalizing euthanasia). Secondly, he identified a territorial dimension, also

6 See Gulbrandsen et al. (2002) for a study of Norwegian elite groups.

called a centre–periphery dimension, comprising issues like centralization versus decentralization, but also cultural issues, like the prestige of rural dialects in the public sphere (Rokkan and Lipset 1967). All these dimensions and cleavages can be found in the three Scandinavian countries, creating social and political tensions. Even in small Denmark, there are cultural, including religious, differences between Copenhagen and the Thy region in Northern Jutland.

1.5 Growing Diversity, Religious Complexity, and New Secularity

In all the Scandinavian countries, from the 19th century until today, there has been a gradually growing diversity in the field of worldviews, first within a Christian framework, then including secular worldviews, and, finally, also including religious traditions other than Christianity.

Today, there are peculiar contrasts in the Scandinavian cultural–religious landscape. On the one hand, the Scandinavian countries have strong collective cultural–religious traditions, with majority churches encompassing between two-thirds and three-quarters of the population. On the other hand, it may hardly be considered religious at all. According to the World Values Study and Inglehart–Welzel's cultural map, the three Scandinavian countries are positioned at the most secular corner of the world. Scandinavians score highest on the combination of Self-Expression Values and Secular–Rational Values (see Figure 1.2). The Swedes have been in this secular cultural values corner for two decades, while Danes and Norwegians had moved there by 2015.[7]

In Norway, in particular, there is a strong, organized non-religious humanist strand. This encompasses 2 percent of the population (2016). However, the growth in the number of those outside any organized and registered religious or life stance community is more remarkable, in Scandinavia as in many other Western countries. In Denmark, the rise was from 9 percent in 1988 to 19 percent in 2014, and in Norway from 3 to 13 percent (Furseth et al. 2018). Figures for Sweden are not available, but they are probably higher than in the other two countries. However, staying out of organized communities do not necessarily imply that people are not concerned with religious or spiritual issues.

7 World Values Survey, Institute for Futures Studies, accessed 23 Aug 2017, http://www.iffs.se/en/world-values-survey/. Strictly speaking, the Inglehart–Welzel cultural map is based mainly on questions about values, but indirectly the map also tells quite a lot about religion.

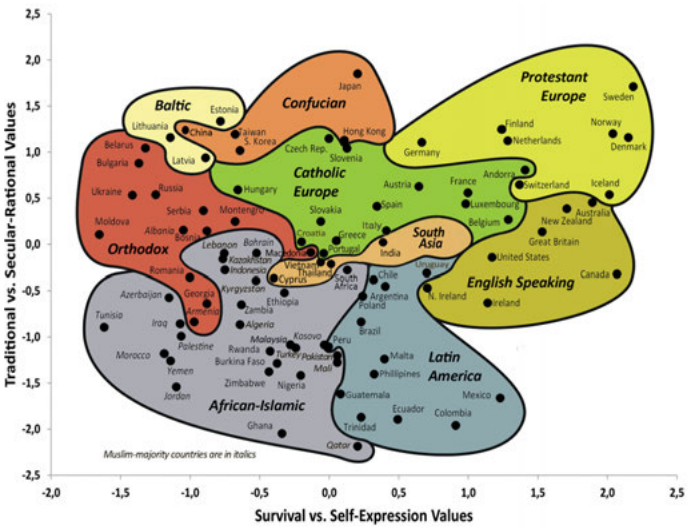

Figure 1.2 Inglehart–Welzel's cultural map (2015) based on the World Values Survey.

There has been a decline in the membership of the majority churches, with the steepest declines in Sweden. While 9 out of 10 Scandinavians were members in 1988, this was down to 7 of 10 Swedes and 3 of 4 Danes and Norwegians in 2014. These are still high shares of the population. However, there has been a decline in participation in the rites of passage among members, as well as an erosion of beliefs and religious self-identification (see Chapter 2).

The relative membership decline of the majority churches is partly due to changing religious practices and beliefs among the native-born population, and partly due to immigration. Many of those coming from other countries bring other religions with them. For example, Polish migrant workers have expanded the number of Catholics, and immigrants from Muslim countries have resulted in a visible Islamic presence. In 2014, Christian communities outside the majority Lutheran churches had a share of 6 – 7 percent of the populations in Norway and Sweden, but no more than 2 percent in Denmark. Members in registered faith communities from other religions, taken together, made up no more than 3 percent of the Norwegian population in 2014, and in Denmark and Sweden it is even fewer (Furseth et al. 2018).

Islam is the fastest growing among these religions, although the numbers are not easy to trace; there are Muslims who are outside the registered mosques. In any case, non-Muslim Scandinavians perceive the share of Muslims to be much higher than it actually is, according to surveys in 2016. Danes guessed

that 15 percent of the population in the country were Muslims, while the actual estimate at that time was 4.1 percent. In Norway, the guess among people was 12 percent, while the actual estimate was 3.7 percent. The Swedes thought the country was 17 percent Muslim, while the figure was 4.6 percent.[8]

With this greater diversity comes a religious complexity, Inger Furseth (2018) suggests. She argues that religious complexity in the Nordic countries 'consists of seemingly contradictory trends, such as a growing secularization in the Nordic populations, trends of both differentiation and de-differentiation of religion at the state level, a growing presence of religion as a topic at the political level, a greater visibility of religion in the media, and a de-privatization of religion at the level of civil society' (ibid, 16). This religious complexity is bringing the Scandinavian countries, with their historically fairly homogenous cultural and religious traditions, more on a par with other Western European societies. There is a growing secularity, higher visibility of religion in public debate, and new expressions of public religion by immigrants. This growing diversity and complexity easily invites tensions and conflicts over religion and religiously infused political issues.

1.6 Globalization, Immigration Policies, and Populist Pressure

As the Scandinavian countries have gradually become more multicultural and multi-religious, social inequality has acquired a new dimension. Social inequality now not only refers to economic inequality, but also to inequality based on ethnicity and immigrant background. The ongoing immigration create tensions in the Scandinavian welfare states (Brochmann and Hagelund 2012). 'The welfare state puts forward important premises for the kind of integration policy that is possible to develop ... while at the same time welfare policy has important consequences for immigrants' everyday lives' in Scandinavia (Brochmann and Hagelund 2012, 1). Tensions over immigration have been increasing recently all over Europe, including Scandinavia. This must be understood against the background of the economic crises in Europe from 2009 onwards, and the increasing number of refugees from conflict areas outside Europe for a period in 2015. Rog-

8 Line Fransson, "Ny undersøkelse: Vi tror det er langt flere muslimer enn det egentlig er. I Norge – og resten av verden," [New report: We think there are more Muslims than is the case], *Dagbladet,* 20 Dec 2016, http://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/vi-tror-det-er-langt-flere-muslimer-enn-det-egentlig-er-i-norge-og-resten-av-verden/66547941.

ers Brubaker (2017) has given a description of the rise of right-wing populist movements in several European countries. These movements, he claims, have partly shifted from nationalism to 'civilizationalism', driven by a perceived civilizational threat from Islam. The movements combine an identitarian 'Christianism' (with a relatively low level of religiosity) and a more secular, and ostensibly liberal, defence of gender equality, freedom of speech, and increasingly also gay rights – all with polemical edges against Islam. This description has some relevance also to Scandinavia. Denmark, Norway, and Sweden have chosen different policies on immigration and the integration of immigrants, with Sweden being the most generous and inviting to newcomers. Denmark approved a generous immigration law in 1983, but following the 9/11 attack in 2001, and the Danish Muhammad cartoon crisis in 2005–2006, the Danish political take on immigration hardened (Lindroth 2016, 82–100).

In Sweden, an anti-immigration party entered parliament in 2010. In Norway, the terror caused by the right-wing Norwegian Anders Behring Breivik, in 2011, was aimed at liberal immigration policies, particularly against Islam. In Denmark, the new centre–left government that was elected in 2011 softened the harsh policies on immigration of the previous governments (Brochmann and Hagelund 2012, ix–x). However, the more liberal policies did not last. In particular, following the many refugees and asylum seekers, in autumn 2015, restrictions on immigration were imposed in all three countries.[9] At the outset, many Scandinavians countered the strict immigration policies of their governments in accordance with their high levels of social trust, which is defined as a shared belief that strangers will not harm or deceive you. Tensions have been sharper since, due to public conflicts over Muslim immigration.

It is difficult to trace comparative figures among the Scandinavian countries. By the beginning of 2016, 16.3 percent of all those living in Norway were immigrants or were Norwegian-born with immigrant parents.[10] In Sweden, the figures are higher. In 2012, the foreign-born counted for 15 percent of the population; in addition, 5 percent were the descendants of immigrants. About half of all immigrants in Scandinavia at that point were from Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Pettersen and Østby 2013). During the refugee and asylum crisis of autumn 2015, Sweden took in a much larger share of asylum seekers (162,000) than Den-

9 A presentation of recent Norwegian refugee policy is given in Chapter 10.

10 Statistics Norway, "Key figures for the population," accessed 30 August 2017. https://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/nokkeltall/population.

mark (21,000) and Norway (31,000).[11] However, the number of people that were arriving created tensions in all three countries.

Established political parties in Scandinavia are experiencing emerging tensions with right-wing populist parties, primarily over issues of immigration from Muslim countries. The meaning of 'populism' differs and it can only be fully understood in the political and cultural context of the various countries (Herkman 2016). In Denmark, Dansk Folkeparti (The Danish People's Party) is a strong force in national politics, receiving one-fifth of the votes in the 2015 election. In Sweden, the established parties have avoided cooperation with the immigration critical Sverigedemokraterna (The Swedish Democrats). By 2017, this front was loosening up, as other parties have had to listen to the growing unrest over immigration. In Norway, Fremskrittspartiet (The Progress Party), in 2018, is part of the government, with the minister for justice and immigration in their portfolio.

1.7 The Public Sphere in the Nordic Model

Religion and media are two of the institutional fields where freedom of expression is particularly important for deliberation and democracy in modern societies (Engelstad et al. 2017b, 2). Public religion (see Chapter 4) and public media (see Chapters 3 and 5) are both part of the public sphere. Besides media and religion, Engelstad et al. (2017b) point out that arts and culture, research and higher education, and voluntary organizations are areas of the public sphere in Scandinavia. The socio-economic base influences cultural expressions, but the public sphere is, at the same time, 'an essential precondition for the shape of the socio-political configuration' (Engelstad et al. 2017b, 2). As we have noted, the Scandinavian countries distinguish themselves from the liberal models of the UK and US, but also from most countries in continental Europe (Esping-Andersen 1990).

The Scandinavian or Nordic public sphere is considered to be part of the ideal model of an extended 'Nordic model' that has its normative preconditions in democratic culture, egalitarianism, and social inclusion (Engelstad, Larsen, and Rogstad 2017). Despite the commonalities with other modern, in particular European, societies, the particularities of the Scandinavian and Nordic welfare societies give the Scandinavian and Nordic public spheres specific characteris-

11 Eurostat, "Asylum and first-time asylum applicants by citizenship, age and sex: Annual aggregated data (rounded)," accessed 31 March, 2017. http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_asyappctza&lang=en.

tics. The specificities are partly due to the neo-corporatist character of the Nordic countries, with state intervention, support, and subsidies in all areas of the public sphere – including the area of religion (Furseth 2017, 222) and of media (Syvertsen et al. 2014). In Scandinavia, churches and mosques, newspapers and public broadcasting, political parties and NGOs alike, receive state funding in order to stimulate the public sphere; with a deep respect for the freedom of expression and the freedom of religion.

Freedom of expression has been enshrined in the law in all of the Scandinavian countries for more than 150 years, with Sweden's 1766 freedom of expression law being the first in the world. With an amendment to the Constitution in 2004, the Norwegian government even obtained the responsibility to establish an infrastructure for 'an open and enlightened public discourse' (§100). However, the freedom of expression is not without exceptions. Hate speech, threats, harassment, discrimination, defamation, the invasion of privacy, libel and slander, are not accepted. National and security interests also impose restrictions. However, freedom of expression is a strongly held value in Scandinavia (Kierulf and Rønning 2009; Rønning 2013).

Defence of this freedom ended in violent conflicts in the Middle East when Muhammad cartoons from Denmark were displayed, which became a transnational media event (Eide, Kunelius, and Phillips 2008). Freedom of expression becomes a fragile human right when statements could be immediately distributed into other contexts with digital mediation (Carlsson 2016). Religiously framed threats by radical Islamists were defended in Norwegian court on the basis of freedom of expression.[12] Norwegian media use the freedom of expression to criticize religion, Islam, and Muslim groups. At the same time, researchers document that Norwegian journalists and editors are becoming more careful with *what* and *how* to publish, in order to avoid attracting reactions from radical Islamists (Elgvin and Rogstad 2017).

Researchers (Midtbøen, Steen-Johnsen, and Thorbjørnsrud 2017) have used the term 'boundary struggles' to describe the contestations of free speech in the public sphere in Scandinavia. The focus on discursive patterns in the public sphere, following the tradition from Habermas, which is discussed within institutional settings by Engelstad et al. (2017a), need to be complemented with a perspective on the boundary work going on in the public sphere, Bernard Enjolras (2017) argues. The public sphere is a social space where cognitive and sym-

12 Ubaydullah Hussain was, in 2015, found guilty of threats against journalists, but the courts accepted his support for Islamist terror attacks in public statements. However, on 4 April 2017, he was sentenced to nine years in prison for terror recruitment to IS. The verdict was confirmed in higher court on 18 January 2018.

bolic struggles over recognition take place, he holds. This implies struggles over the symbolic boundaries to who belongs and who doesn't. This view of the public sphere 'as a social space where cultural struggles are fought, where the moral order is shaped, maintained, and contested' (Enjolras 2017, 304), fits with the perspective in this book on how religion is contested in various settings. With public religion, social interactions, identifications, and interpretations must be observed. Still, the institutional frame matters. In our case, the frame set by the media system is of prime interest.

1.8 'Media Welfare States' in Global Connectivity

The Scandinavian welfare states should also be considered 'media welfare states' that stand on four pillars: First, the media are regarded as part of the communication services that offer public goods and therefore should have extensive cross-subsidies, as well as obligations for universality. Second, editorial freedom is secured through self-governance by the media professional associations and, partly, by law. Third, in their cultural policies, the government's responsibility encompasses a 'media manifold' (Couldry and Hepp 2017, 56) that aims to secure diversity and quality. Fourth, solutions to economic and cultural challenges are sought in consensus through cooperation between the main stakeholders: the state, the media and communication industries, and the public (Syvertsen et al. 2014, 17).

This media system is regarded as a cornerstone of Scandinavian democracy, and the standards of the news media are of particular importance. Availability of a diversity of news sources to all citizens, equality and pluralism in media ownership and formats, and the critical assessment of how the news media perform their watchdog task, are criteria that are applied in the Media Democracy Monitor (Donk and Trappel 2011). Sweden comes out as a 'mixed media model under market pressures' (von Krogh and Nord 2011), which is an apt characteristic of the news media system in Denmark and Norway also.

The states support and guard this democratic Scandinavian media system through laws, public funding and subsidies, and by an active media policy and state support for the telecom industries and digitalization. The Scandinavian countries are thus prominent examples of the 'democratic corporatist model' that was laid out by Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini in their classic comparison of media systems (2004). Stig Hjarvard disagrees with them that Scandinavia will drift towards a liberal model, similar to that known in the UK and North America. He argues that mediatization (see Chapter 3) implies a further mutual adaptation between media and politics (Hjarvard 2013, 46–47). Hallin and Mancini

recently (2016) admitted that the hypothesis of a convergence towards a liberal model has to be abandoned. This is confirmed by Sigurd Allern and Mark Blach-Ørsten's study on Scandinavian news media as political institutions: The ongoing commercialism has produced no more than a revision of the democratic corporatist model. Scandinavia still has large state-owned public service media corporations (see Chapter 5). In Scandinavia, 'a significant involvement of the state in the media sector has and continues to coexist with strong protection for press freedom and a deeply held respect for journalistic autonomy' (Allern and Blach-Ørsten 2011, 101).

Despite the corporatist and consensual frame, tensions over media policies in the Scandinavian media welfare states intensify as competition from networked media and the global connectivity of corporations (van Dijck 2013) change the economic and communicative foundations of the 'legacy' mass media (Svensson and Edström 2016).

Scandinavians are highly connected, thanks to advanced technological networks that include almost everyone. In Norway, 97 percent of the population had Internet access in 2015, in Denmark 92 percent, and in Sweden 91 percent, compared to an EU average of 83 percent.[13] Nearly all Scandinavians with access are daily Internet users.[14] The social media are popular.[15]

Although the national media policies have left the legacy media in Scandinavia in relatively strong positions, the ongoing transformations relating to further digitalization of the media industries do shake the Scandinavian media landscape. Much of the reading, listening, and viewing will move to digital services. Newspapers were, in 2015, read daily by 72 percent of all Norwegians, with a larger share online than in print. The reading shares were somewhat lower in Denmark and Sweden, and the pace of change from print to online news differed. While reading print papers dominated in Sweden, a small majority of Danes preferred online news. Online radio and television consumption is not specified in the comparative statistics. In total, 75 percent of the Danes listened to radio daily in 2015, against 69 percent among the Swedes and 59 percent in Norway. Eighty-one percent of the Swedes, in total, watched television daily in

13 Nordicom, "Mediestatistik," [Media statistics], accessed 30 June 2017. http://nordicom.gu.se/sv/mediefakta/mediestatistik.

14 Norway 89 percent, Denmark 87 percent, Sweden 82 percent in 2015, against an EU average of 67 percent. Source: Nordicom, ibid.

15 In Norway, 73 percent of 16 – 74 year olds reported using social media in 2015, in Denmark 65 percent, and in Sweden 62 percent, against an EU average of 50 percent. Source: Nordicom, ibid.

2015, compared to 70 percent of the Danes and 67 percent of the Norwegians.[16] These figures imply that legacy mass media achieve high audience numbers in Scandinavia, whether in traditional forms or in online services.

The human 'connectedness' among Scandinavians thus extends to 'connectivity', where information about social media users is absorbed into corporate systems behind the platforms which they use to communicate, like Facebook. 'Connectivity' is the 'advanced strategy of algorithmically connecting users to content, users to users, platforms to users, users to advertisers, and platforms to platforms' (van Dijck and Poell 2013, 9). Through the media dynamics (see Chapter 3) in this 'culture of connectivity' (van Dijck 2013), the small-scale Scandinavian populations communicate among themselves and, at the same time, are integrated into large-scale globalization.

1.9 Concluding Note

It is difficult to sum up briefly what characterizes Scandinavia, especially if we want to grasp the nuances and contemporary changes. We have described a comparatively happy, harmonious, peaceful, safe, and egalitarian corner of the world. We have also shown that Scandinavia is becoming increasingly intertwined in European and global processes: right-wing populism, radical Islamism, immigration, and a general economic crisis in Europe. Just one warning: It would be too simplistic to see Scandinavia as a kind of Paradise Island, now threatened from outside. We have tried to nuance and modify the picture, pointing at internal dynamics, diversity, and tensions within the region, often in interaction with global tendencies.

On a more specific level, religion is a contested public issue in the changing Scandinavian media welfare states. Chapter 2 outlines patterns of Scandinavian attitudes on the matter, Chapter 3 takes on the media dynamics, and Chapter 4 introduces the understanding of religion for the case studies to follow.

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